

TITLE: Accent Bias of Pixar's Movie *Cars 2***AUTHORS: Amber Delcid and Gharbeela Sami****FACULTY SPONSOR: Eric Friginal, Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Linguistics and ESL**

Introduction: This project is on Linguistic Profiling. The topic was inspired by John Baugh, the first linguist to coin the term “Linguistic Profiling.” In his experiment, funded by a three year, \$500,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, he tried to distinguish the “auditory component” of racial profiling while attempting to obtain a rental listing by speaking in three different and distinct accents: Standard American English, Chicano English, and African-American English. Within this project, Baugh's theme is taken a step further by exploring how common place this bias is against English speakers with strong dialects or accents. Will having an undesirable accent or dialect produce a negative linguistic consequence?

Methodology: To collect our data on linguistic prejudice of English dialects, we picked the voices of five characters from the Pixar film *Cars 2*. The voices of Lightning McQueen, Miles Axlerod, Fillmore, Tow Mater, and Luigi served as our examples of American neutral, British, West Coast Hippie, Southern, and Italian accents, respectively. To effectively administer our survey, we took audio clips of each of the five voices from both films. By removing the audio from the video, we eliminated possible biases by the way the characters looked or portrayed themselves. Our participants, therefore, were answering the questions only based on the voice they heard. We asked fifteen individuals from three separate age groups giving us a total of forty-five participants. We chose elementary age children, young college students, and adults around age forty or older to fulfill our three age groups. Our participants were a mix of male and female as well as from many different ethnicities from the Atlanta area. The questionnaire administered asked questions based on the character and personalities of the five voices as well as if the people behind the voices would be personal friends or those in power. In addition, we asked each participant which person was his or her favorite. Analyzing these answers, we saw just how our peers and neighbors view certain English accents and the possible changes in these views that come with age.

Results: From the data collection, it is evident that those with stronger accents (Southern, West Coast, and Italian) were put in a negative light. The Southern voice (Tow-Mater) was seen as the most friendly out of all the characters presented, but not to be taken seriously as a boss or president. The West Coast voice (Fillmore) had a couple of people laughing, but he was not considered intelligent at all, and neither should he be put in an influential position of either boss or teacher. The Italian voice (Luigi) was perceived as a “nice guy” but he was the least favorite out of all the characters presented.

Conclusion: If the data pool had its way, Lightning McQueen (the SAE voice) would be president and Miles Axlerod (the UK English voice) was considered the most intelligent. Though there was a strong correlation between intelligence and positions of power being awarded from this criteria based on the “auditory component,” it is interesting to see the loyal streak to have an SAE voice as president.

Recommendations: The goal of this research was to show linguistic prejudice (or bias) of English dialects based on a popular children's film, *Cars 2*. Since our study intended to track the reactions of three groups (elementary age children, young college students, and adults around age forty or older) to see if there is a consistent linguistic bias of the English dialects throughout the age groups, this project can be taken a step further by breaking down the groups into ethnicities and social classes.